

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DACCA 03568 01 OF 02 051101Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05
HA-05 EA-10 NEAE-00 /082 W
-----074407 051118Z /10

O R 051018Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9615
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 3568

PARIS FOR TONER BANGLADESH CONSORTIUM DELEGATION

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT BG
SUBJ: INITIAL REACTIONS TO ZIA'S VICTORY

REF: DACCA 3548

SUMMARY. PRESIDENT ZIA, POLLING 77 PERCENT OF THE VOTE
(WITH ALMOST ALL TATIONS REPORTING), HAS BEEN ELECTED TO A
FIVE YEAR TERM AS PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH. SOMEWHAT
INCONGRUOUSLY, WE DO NOT KNOW AT THIS TIME WHEN THE FIVE-YEAR
CLOCK WILL BEGIN AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE CONSTITUTIONAL
NATURE OF THE OFFICE IN WHICH HE IS TO CONTINUE IS UNCLEAR.
HIS VICTORY MARGIN FOLLOWS A PATTERN WHICH BEGAN IN 1937
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DACCA 03568 01 OF 02 051101Z

OF SUBSTANTIALLY LARGE MARGINS IN EACH ELECTION HELD IN THE
EASTERN ISLAMIC PORTION OF WHAT WAS ONCE UNITED INDIA.
THE TURNOUT WAS VERY CLOSE TO THAT OF THE 1970 ELECTIONS
IN EAST PAKISTAN. NO UNTOWARD INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED
IN THE PRESS OR WERE NOTED IN OUR OBSERVATION OR THOSE
OF OTHERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED. THE PRINCIPAL NON-
PARTICIPANT, ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN, HAS NOTED THE PEACEFUL NATURE

OF THE POLLING, SO FAR ONLY ONE AWAMI LEAGUER HAS SPECIFICALLY CHARGED "RIGGING" ALTHOUGH OSMANI ALSO HAS CLAIMED SOME "IRREGULARITIES" OCCURRED. ZIA IS TO HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE EVENING OF JUNE 5; OSMANI MORNING OF JUNE 6; OSMANI WILL, NO DOUBT, EXPAND ON HIS JUNE 4 CHARGES OF IRREGULARITIES AND HIS EARLIER ONES OF INTIMIDATION. NONETHELESS MOST OBSERVERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN, INCLUDING FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS, FEEL THAT THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTION WAS FAIR BY SOUTH ASIAN STANDARDS. TWO PARTIES REMAINED BANNED DURING THE POLL, ALTHOUGH MEMBERS OF BOTH PARTICIPATED PROMINENTLY IN THE CAMPAIGN, AND PERHAPS A THOUSAND POLITICAL PRISONERS REMAIN IN JAIL FOR VARIOUS REASONS, BUT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE FINAL RESULT HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY EITHER CIRCUMSTANCE. ZIA'S NEXT TASKS WILL BE TO DEFINE THE ROLES OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE PARLIAMENT AND TO PREPARE FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS PROMISED FOR DECEMBER. END SUMMARY.

1. AS REPORTED REFTEL, PRESIDENT ZIA HAS WON AN OVERHELMING VICTORY IN HIS CONTEST WITH GENERAL OSMANI (AND EIGHT OTHERS) FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF BANGLADESH. HE POLLED ABOUT 77 PERCENT OF THE VOTE OSMANI'S 22 PERCENT. THE TURNOUT WAS ABOUT 54 PERCENT.

2. ONE OF THE QUESTIONS WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN ANSWERED IS THE TIME AT WHICH ZIA WILL ENTER (OR REENTER) THE PRESIDENCY AND THE FIVE-YEAR TERM WILL BEGIN. THIS IS OF CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DACCA 03568 01 OF 02 051101Z

LESS IMPORTANCE WITH A ZIA VICTORY THAN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HAD OSMANI WON THE ELECTION, BUT IT MUST BE ANSWERED SOON. MORE IMPORTANT, THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF THE PRESIDENT HAS NOT BEEN DETERMINED. ZIA HAS BEEN ELECTED UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF 1972 AS AMENDED BOTH BY THE MUJIB-SPONSORED FOURTH AMENDMENT AND BY THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION. THE KEY PORTION OF THE FOURTH AMENDMENT WHICH STANDS, THE PART PERTAINING TO A SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY HAVING BEEN REVOKED, IS THE PRIMACY OF THE PRESIDENT IN THE GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE. ZIA, HOWEVER, HAS MANY TIMES SAID THAT HE FAVORS A "SOVEREIGN PARLIAMENT". THERE ARE CONSTITUTIONAL DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN A DIRECTLY ELECTED PRESIDENT AND A "SOVEREIGN PARLIAMENT" WHICH WILL REQUIRE RESOLUTION AND CLEAR STATEMENT BEFORE CAMPAIGNING FOR THE PROMISED DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS CAN BEGIN. NO ONE (PERHAPS EVEN ZIA HIMSELF) HAS ANY CERTAIN IDEA AS TO THE EVENTUAL ROLES OF THE TWO INSTITUTIONS.

3. ZIA'S SHARE OF THE POLL HAS NOT AT ALL BEEN UNPRECEDENTED IN EASTERN BENGAL/EAST PAKISTAN/BANGLADESH. ON THE CONTRARY, EACH ELECTION SINCE AN INCREASED FRANCHISE WAS INTRODUCED IN 1937 HAS BEEN A ROUT OF THE LOSERS AND

IN EACH CASE A SINGLE PERSONALITY HAS DOMINATED THE VICTORIOUS SIDE (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF 1954 WHEN TWO POOLED THEIR RESOURCES) WHILE A BASICALLY NEGATIVE ISSUE HAS BEEN THE KEY. THE FIGURES FOR MUSLIM SEATS IN 1973 ARE LESS EASILY AVAILABLE BUT THE DOMINANT PERSONALITY WAS FAZL-UL HAQ AND HIS KRISHAK PRAJA PARTY SWEEPED THE POLLS IN MUSLIM BENGAL ON AN ANTI-LANDLORD PROGRAM. IN 1946 THE MUSLIM LEAGUE BEHIND H.S. SUHRAWARDY WON MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF THE POLL ON THE MUSLIM LEAGUE TICKET FOR BOTH THE CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES AMONG MUSLIM VOTERS ON THE ISSUE OF BEING OPPOSED TO "HINDU RAJ". IN 1954, HAQ AND SUHRAWARDY COMBINED THE FORCES OF THEIR KRISHAK SRAMIK PARTY AND AWAMI LEAGUE TO ROUT THE MUSLIM LEAGUE IN THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION ON A PLATFORM OF

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 DACCA 03568 01 OF 02 051101Z

FORM BASED LARGELY ON ANTI-URDU AND ANTI-WEST PAKISTANI "DOMINANCE" AND WON 206 SEATS TO THE MUSLIM LEAGUE'S NINE WITH ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL MUSLIM VOTE. IN 1970, ON AGAIN AN ANTI-WEST PAKISTAN PLATFORM, THE AWAMI LEAGUE LED BY SHAIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN POLLED 75 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN WINNING ALL BUT TWO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEATS AND 288 OF 300 PROVINCIAL SEATS. ZIA HAS GAINED SUBSTANTIAL CHARISMA IN THE PAST TWO YEARS AND HE, TOO, CAMPAIGNED ON ESSENTIALLY A NEGATIVE ISSUE: THE BARRING OF THE RETURN OF THE BAKSALITES TO OFFICE WITH, AS HE DESCRIBED IT, SUBSERVIENT TO FOREIGN POWERS AND DISORDER AT HOME.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DACCA 03568 02 OF 02 051111Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00
AID-05 EA-10 NEAE-00 /082 W
-----074451 051117Z /15

O R 051018Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9616
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DACCA 3568

PARIS FOR TONER BANGLADESH CONSURTIIUM DELEGATION

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

4. ANOTHER STANDARD MEASURE OF THE POSSIBLE OCCURRENCE OF RIGGING IN ELECTIONS IS THE TURNOUT (PARTICIPATION). IN THE JUNE 3 ELECTION THE TURNOUT WAS 54 PER CENT. IN THE KEY 1970 ELECTION THE TURNOUT WAS 54.8 PER CENT. BOTH ARE HIGHER THAN THE 1954 FIGURE OF 37.6 PER CENT, BUT IN SOUTHERN ASIA IN GENERAL THERE HAS BEEN A SUBSTANTIAL

INCREASE IN THE PAST TWO DECADES IN TURNOUTS, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN A LEVELING OFF IN THIS DECADE. BOGRA DISTRICT, WHERE ZIA OBTAINED HIS HIGHEST VOTE, INCREASED FROM 57 PER CENT TURNOUT IN 1970 TO 70 PER CENT NOW. IT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DACCA 03568 02 OF 02 051111Z

APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY DISTRICT TO HAVE INCREASED SHARPLY (SUBJECT TO MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS LATER). THEREFORE, THE TURNOUT IN THIS ELECTION APPEARS TO BE IN LINE WITH WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED. IT NEEDS TO BE ADDED, OF COURSE, THAT THE 88 PERCENT PARTICIPATION IN THE MAY, 1977, REFERENDUM WAS QUITE CLEARLY FALSE. TWO REASONS (IN ADDITION TO, PERHAPS, A GREATER EFFORT TO CONDUCT A STRIGHT ELECTION) ACCOUNT FOR THIS. THIS ELECTION WAS A MARKED-BALLOT POLL WHILE THE REFERENDUM WAS A TWO-BOX (ONE "YES" AND ONE "NO") POLL WHICH ENABLED OVER ENTHUSIASTIC OFFICIALS TO TEAR OFF UNUSED BALLOTS AND STUFF THE "YES) BOX. THIS TIME MARKING WOULD ALSO HAVE BEEN REQUIRED. SECONDLY, THE MORE IMPORTANT, IN 1977 THERE WERE NO POLLING AGENTS OF CANDIDATES OBSERVING THE VOTING AND SIGNING THE SEAL ON THE BOXES AWHO COULD RAISE OBJECTIONS. THIS TIME AGENTS OF ZIA AND OSMANI WERE PRESENT (OR WERE PERMITTED TO BE PRESENT ALONG WITH AGENTS OF THE OTHER EIGHT) AND OVERSAW THE POLLING. THESE ARRANGEMENTS, WHILE NOT COMPLETELY FOOLPROOF, MADE ANY TAMPERING MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.

5. THERE HAVE, IN FACT AS YET BEEN ONLY A FEW COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE POLLING. RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL KHALILUR RAHMAN,

NOW IN THE AWAMI LEAGUE, VOICED A COMPLAINT ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 3, BUT SO FAR AS WE HAVE HEARD HE HAS BEEN GIVEN NO SUPPORT IN HIS GROUNDING. KHALIL PERSONALLY HAS BEEN UPSET ABOUT HIS EARLY RETIREMENT FROM THE ARMY JUST AFTER THE AUGUST, 1975 COUP AND HIS DISPLACEMENT BY ZIA UNDER MUSHTAQUE'S ORDERS. OSMANI IN A MORE GENERAL STATEMENT, JUNE 4, COMPLAINED OF "IRREGULARITIES." ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN, WHO CHOSE TO SIT OUT THE ELECTION, COMMENTED ON THE ORDERLINESS AND PEACEFUL NATURE OF THE ELECTION. ADDITIONAL COMPLAINTS CANNOT BE RULED OUT AND OSMANI MAY EXPAND HIS AT HIS JUNE 6 PRESS CONFERENCE. THE WAMI LEAGUE, WE ARE TOLD, IS MEETING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DACCA 03568 02 OF 02 051111Z

TO DECIDE ITS FUTURE ACTION. THE RUMOR WILL HAS IT THAT DEMONSTRATIONS ARE POSSIBLE, BUT OUR SOUNDINGS INDICATE NOW THAT THE PUBLIC, WHICH VOTED FOR ZIA VERY LARGELY ON HIS STABILITY AND LAW AND ORDER IMAGES, ARE UNLIKELY TO LEND SUPPORT TO ANYTHING SMACKING OF TURMOIL. MOST OBSERVERS, INCLUDING FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT AND DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES BELIEVE THAT THE ELECTION WAS GENERALLY FAIR. WE EXPECT TO HAVE MORE ON THIS AFTER ZIA AND OSMANI MEET THE PRESS.

6. ALTHOUGH TWO POLITICAL PARTIES (THE CPB AND THE DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE) REMAINED UNDER BAN DURING THE CAMPAIGN, IT IS DOUBTFUL IF THIS HAD ANY EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME. LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES WERE ACTIVE WITH THE CPB SUPPORTING OSMANI AND THE DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE AIDING ZIA, WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE LEADER MUSHTAQUE AHMAD WHO IS IN JAIL. ABOUT A THOUSAND POLITICAL PRISONERS REMAIN IN DETENTION, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL WERE RELEASED BY COURT ACTION DURING OR IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE CAMPAIGN. FEW OF THESE ARE TO NATIONAL STATURE AND IT IS UNLIKELY THE RESULT WOULD HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT HAD THEY BEEN FREE.

8. ZIA'S PRINCIPAL POLITICAL TASK NOW IS THE FORMULATION OF A GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE IN WHICH THE ROLES OF PARLIAMENT AND THE PRESIDENT ARE CLEARLY DEFINED AS A PRELUDE TO THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WHICH ARE SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER. HIS LARGE VICTORY SHOULD GIVE HIM MORE CONFIDENCE ADMINISTRATIVELY AND POLITICALLY AS HE MOVES TOWARD DECEMBER.
SCHNEIDER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DACCA03568
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780234-0132
Format: TEL
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780697/aaaadfqw.tel
Line Count: 270
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a2963d92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 DACCA 3548
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2494591
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INITIAL REACTIONS TO ZIA'S VICTORY
TAGS: PINT, BG, (RAHMAN, ZIAUR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a2963d92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014